

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 11, 2001**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, April 11, 2001, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by Mr. Alfredo Sotomayor of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, substituting for the committee's chair, Mr. William Ingersoll. A list of action items resulting from the meeting is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Appendix C and proposed changes to Chapter 3.*

INTRODUCTION

The committee returned to earlier discussions of proposed changes to Chapter 3 prepared by Ms. Rosanna Buhl and distributed to committee members by Mr. Ingersoll on March 1. There was moderate discussion of whether there exists an official NELAC mechanism or format for submitting proposed changes after the publication deadline for an annual meeting has passed. The committee's scribe agreed to assist the committee in determining whether such a mechanism exists. After participants had identified the document to be discussed, Mr. Sotomayor asked Ms. Buhl to lead discussion of the proposed changes.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO CHAPTER 3

Ms. Buhl explained the rationale behind her proposed changes to Chapter 3. The changes refine basic qualifications for assessors to eliminate the grandfathering clause. They also introduce the concept of lead assessor as an individual who must meet all the training requirements of the NELAC Standards.

The committee discussed various aspects of the final examination to be administered during the basic assessor training course, with particular emphasis on the passing score and the security of the examination. Committee members questioned whether discussion of the accrediting authority's responsibility in administering and scoring the examination had been resolved in their previous teleconference. In discussion of how explicitly the requirements for the final examination should be spelled out in Chapter 3, the committee agreed that Chapter 3 should state that the examination is a test of the assessor's knowledge of the NELAC Standards. The committee also agreed that Chapter 3 should define a passing score as 70%. It was suggested that the passing score be written as 70/100 to imply a 100-question examination. It was agreed that issues such as where the examination is administered or whether questions are available to participants beforehand need not be spelled out in Chapter 3. Some committee members felt that it did not matter whether participants have access to questions beforehand because learning the answers to the questions equates to learning the necessary material. Committee members also agreed that the written examination is only part of the requirement for becoming an assessor. They suggested that the major benefit of attending the basic assessor training course is interactive learning in such areas as planning an audit, reviewing raw data, and comportment.

The committee discussed the proposed definition of lead assessor. It was noted that the person designated as the lead assessor should be on-site at the laboratory during the assessment. There was moderate discussion of distinctions in qualifications and responsibilities between lead assessors and assessors.

The committee also discussed the definition of technical specialist, with emphasis on distinctions in qualifications between assessors and technical specialists. There was moderate discussion of Section 3.4.1.2 and its requirement that technical specialists be accompanied by an assessor. It was noted that technical specialists need to know both method requirements and program requirements. It was also noted that Section 3.4.1.2 was written in committee at NELAC 6 in response to comments from the audience. Noting that they are interested in audience input on the issue of technical specialists, the committee decided to include the issue for discussion on their agenda for NELAC 7.

Ms. Buhl indicated that she will prepare the committee's final proposed changes to Chapter 3 in response to the discussion of her proposed changes.

UPDATE ON APPENDIX C

Ms. Mimi Uhlfelder reported that she hopes to distribute a draft version of Appendix C to fellow subcommittee members Mr. Sotomayor and Mr. Richard Sheibley by April 18, 2001. Following a review by the Appendix C subcommittee, the appendix will be distributed to the rest of the On-site Assessment Committee. Ms. Uhlfelder indicated that she anticipates presenting a draft version of Appendix C at NELAC 7.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Ms. Marlene Moore and Mr. David Friedman reminded the committee that they had talked several months ago about performing a "mock assessment" at Ms. Uhlfelder's laboratory. Ms. Moore and Mr. Friedman noted that they would like to perform such an assessment at Ms. Uhlfelder's laboratory in mid-May. Mr. Friedman cited himself as an example of an assessor with limited assessment experience, some laboratory experience, some assessor training, and general knowledge of the NELAC Standards. He explained the purpose of the exercise as testing whether such an assessor could adequately perform a laboratory quality systems audit to determine if the laboratory produces data of known and documented quality. The committee discussed the merits and the logistics of such an exercise. They agreed to discuss the issue further in their next teleconference.

CONCLUSION

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. EDT as the committee's allotted teleconference time expired. The committee's next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 27, via teleconference.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 11, 2001**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Committee will determine NELAC mechanism/format for submission of proposed changes to NELAC Standard after publication deadline for annual meeting has passed. (Buhl)	04/27/01
2.	Committee will summarize proposed changes to Chapter 3 for presentation at NELAC 7. (Buhl)	04/27/01
3.	Committee will include issue of technical specialist (definition, qualifications, responsibilities/authority, distinctions between technical specialist and assessor, etc.) as topic for discussion on NELAC 7 agenda. (Ingersoll)	05/21/01
4.	Committee will consider mock assessment to be performed at real-world laboratory. (All - led by Moore, Friedman, and Uhlfelder)	04/27/01

**PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 11, 2001**

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